

Members of the Environment Committee,

I will first quote from Peter Picone, veteran wildlife biologist with the Connecticut DEEP:

"For now, the deer management dilemma will continue until we get people in leadership roles to understand the realities of deer as renewable natural resources. Unfortunately, the lack of understanding deer as a renewable natural resource leads the state legislature to pass wildlife laws that are counter-productive to hunting and hunters."

"What animal in the United States causes more human deaths? Is it bees? Is it snakes? The answer is deer. There are between 150 and 200 human fatalities each year due to motor vehicle strikes on our highways."

Both quotes are from "Wildlife is My Passion," his book self-published in 2008.

Bow-hunting of deer on private property on Sundays will contribute to making the roads in Connecticut safer and will have almost no impact on hikers and others who would like to enjoy the outdoors. It has the bonus of being very quiet so there will still be a distinction between Saturdays when loud gun shots may still be heard.

Studies by ecologists have concluded that the relationship between tick populations/high rates of Lyme Disease and deer overpopulation is likely insignificant, and I do not agree with those who always point to this as a certain fact and a reason to increase deer hunting. It is unscientific and they undermine their own cause. However, the relationship between deer and human deaths on our roads is a certain, known fact. In addition, there is strong scientific support for the fact that deer have been severely overbrowsing plants and negatively impacting our forests. As Aldo Leopold wrote, "one of the penalties of an ecological education is that one lives in a world of wounds; much of the damage inflicted on the land is quite invisible to the layman." If you ask wildlife biologists, ecologists, and foresters about the effects of a morbid excess of deer on our lands they will tell you in painful detail, and if you learn enough about it yourself you will know they aren't exaggerating.

Please don't let the Bambi crowd and others who don't understand hunting or ecology determine wildlife policy in Connecticut. Nonhunters greatly outnumber hunters in Connecticut, and many of those people either do not understand ecological principles or put their love of deer as cute, cuddly animals above clearheadedness (often both go together). I believe these remain the biggest impediments to more sensible legislation, but attitudes may change when statistics showing reduced deer-vehicle collisions are released, when recovering forest communities with diverse wildflowers begin to appear to them in certain areas. Allow responsible, legally sanctioned wildlife harvests that will benefit people and the environment. Vote to authorize Sunday deer harvesting.

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